The Builder.

No. CCCXXXIX.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1849.

EOMAGUS, Caerleon, Cestria, or CHESTER, as we now call it, is known by every one to be full of interest. The Roman and the "Goth" have both left their impress in every quarter, and have concurred to render it a place of delight for the modern antiquary, and the city of all others for "The British Archæological Association" to spend a week in. The Roman altars, hypocausts, and other recovered *vestigia*,—the peculiar arrangement of the streets (the "Rows," as they are termed), the walls, the castle, the numerous stone crypts to be found in various parts of the city, two or three churches, and last in order, but not in importance, the Cathedral,—all claim the attention of the visiter, and gratify the inquirer.

The cathedral externally is in a miserable state of decay, the result of the use of the red sandstone,* and has little of beauty remaining: when the canopied niches, open parapets, and crocketted pinnacles, however, formerly there, were perfect, its appearance must have been exceedingly handsome. It is greatly to be desired that some arrangement for its restoration, its maintenance even, should be speedily made. Internally a considerable sum of money has been spent in repairs, and considerable improvements have been made, especially in the choir, through the exertions of the dean (Dr. Anson), and others. The bishop's throne has been restored, new seating put up, a new stone pulpit and screen erected (mentioned some time since in our pages), some windows filled with stained glass, and other works done. The pulpit has an elaborately carved stone canopy, which is not so satisfactory as the lower part. The details seem to us clumsy, and being supported wholly at the back, corbelling over therefore, the notion of wood rather than of stone is given. It was designed by Mr. Hussey, and was the gift of the present excellent mayor, Sir Edward S. Walker, who, we may here say, has entered most warmly into the views of the Archæologocal Association, and greatly aided in the singular success which has attended the meeting.

A few years ago the choir of the cathedral was vaulted with wood and plaster, made to look like stone, and something is said about pursuing the same course in the nave. We mention this simply that we may advise the authorities to do no such thing. If wood is to be used, let it be *as* wood, and not in the place, and in imitation of another material. The feeling of the chapter appears to be so good, that we feel certain they will receive the remark in the spirit in which it is made.

Mr. Ashpitel, assisted by Mr. C. Bailey, ably illustrated the cathedral on the second evening meeting, and we shall probably give the heads of their paper, so that we will not now make any further remarks on the building beyond mentioning the CHAPTER HOUSE and vestibule, of which we have engraved a view. This, unlike that of Lincoln, illustrated by us some time since, and Salisbury (of which we intend to speak on another occasion) is a parallelogram, and a very interesting specimen of Early English. It is called 50 feet in length, 26 feet wide, and 55 feet high, so that it is nearly a double cube. The heads of the lights, it will be observed, take a peculiar shape, in following the line of the groining. The sides of the apartment at this moment are encumbered by ugly bookcases, but these we have omitted in the view, and hope soon to hear that they have been removed from the building.

The streets of Chester have been much modernized within a few years; they are still, however, full of quaint old fronts, mostly overhanging and belonging in date to the end of the sixteenth and commencement of the seventeenth century. One in Watergate-street is inscribed 1539; another, dated 1652, has this motto, "God's providence is my inheritance;" put up, it is said, by the occupier after escaping the plague. Some of the houses are very elaborately carved. We give a hasty memorandum of one of simpler character.

C.D.A. 5.

Of the churches and some of the works at present being executed we shall have another opportunity to speak. We must now relate succinctly some of the proceedings of the meeting, intending, however, as our custom has been, to refer chiefly to those matters which more immediately interest our readers.

It has been the most successful congress yet held by the association, nearly 400 tickets having been disposed of. From the Bishop, whose courtesy and ability have made friends of all, down to the humblest shopkeeper, all have appeared anxious to aid in rendering the visit an agreeable one. What the Bishop said at the opening meeting, when introducing the president, Lord Albert Conyngham, was made true—"As I am sure there will be nothing wanting on the part of the members of the Association to make their visit instructive to themselves, so I am sure there will be nothing wanting on our part to mark our sense of the privilege that has been conferred on us, and to make your visit, my Lord, so far as we can, agreeable to yourselves, and not altogether unworthy of the distinguished honour which it implies."

The President said in the course of his address,—"Though the science of Archæology may be followed as a relaxation to the mind, it is highly important in the graver pursuits of life. No person taking part in public life can do so without some antiquarian knowledge. The explanation of the technical forms of government, the principles of public policy, the tenures of land, our British union of Teutonic custom with the Roman law, cannot be understood without some antiquarian research. That eminent and often quoted writer, Mons. de Tocqueville, thus lends his authority to the importance of antiquarian research:—If we were able to go back to the elements of states, and to examine the oldest monuments of their history, I doubt not that we should discover the primary cause of the prejudices, the habits, the ruling passions, and in short of all that constitutes what is called the national character. We should then find the explanation of certain customs which now seem at variance with prevailing manners—of such laws as conflict with established principles, and of such incoherent opinions as are here and there to be met with in society; like those fragments of broken chains which we sometimes see hanging from the vaults of an edifice, and supporting nothing. This might explain the destinies of certain nations which seem borne along by unknown force, to ends of which they themselves are ignorant. We cannot investigate and illustrate the monuments and arts of our own country without studying those of the more classic regions. That the artist requires their study we have the authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who says—'But we must not rest contented even in this general study of the moderns; we must trace back the art to its fountain head—to that source from whence they drew their principal excellences, the monuments of pure antiquity. As the inventions and thoughts of the ancients, whether conveyed to us in statues, bas-reliefs, intaglios, cameos, or coins, are to be sought after and carefully studied, the genius that hovers over these relics may be called the father of modern art.' But if the study of antiquity is requisite for the politician and the artist, how much more is it required by those who turn their minds towards that higher study which reflects upon the Almighty and his ways!"

Mr. Dillon Croker read a short paper in

* The earliest portions, belonging to the twelfth century, are in a comparatively sound state.

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